Chapter 69: Breech Baby (1)

OH! DID YOU FEEL IT MOVE?
WA HA
WA HA
LINGLI KICKED HIGHER UP...
...BUT THIS ONE IS ONLY KICKING AT A LOWER SPOT.
FUNNY HOW BABIES CAN BE SO DIFFERENT.
PING
ONLY AT A LOWER SPOT?

DO I HAVE YOUR PERMISSION TO TOUCH YOU?
SURE. IS SOMETHING WRONG?
MAY I PLEASE HAVE A LOOK?

...
THMP
THMP

THE BIRTH WAS MUCH EASIER THAN A FIRST BIRTH WOULD BE OTHER-WISE.
THE PRINCESS'S BODY WAS SMALLER THAN IS STANDARD, WHICH WAS FORTUNATE.
HOW DID PRINCESS LINGLI'S DELIVERY GO?
LADY HONG-NIANG.

I TOOK HER PLACE, GIVEN THE SHORT NOTICE. I HAD ALREADY BEEN STUDYING FOR THE POSITION.
IT WOULDN'T DO TO LEAVE SUCH A CRITICAL TASK TO SOMEONE WHOSE STOMACH WOULD ACHE AT THE IDEA.
WHO ACTED AS MIDWIFE?
WE HAD A SENIOR MIDWIFE STAYING IN THE INNER COURT FOR THE OCCA-SION...
...BUT SHE HAD FALLEN ILL.
CONSORT LIHUA USED A DIFFERENT MIDWIFE, AS WELL.
HONGNIANG IS A VERY DILIGENT WOMAN, SO IT MAKES SENSE THERE WAS NO REAL ISSUE.
WILL THEY CALL A MIDWIFE INTO THE INNER COURT THIS TIME?
MAOMAO.
IF SOMETHING CONCERNS YOU, PLEASE, SPEAK UP.

I AM WONDERING WHAT WE MAY DO...
...IF THIS CHILD TURNS OUT TO BE A BREECH BABY.
BREECH BABY?
YOU ARE CORRECT. THE CHILD ONLY SEEMS TO BE KICKING AT THIS LOWER SPOT.
AND, IF THIS MOVEMENT IS KICKING...
...IN THE LITERAL SENSE OF THE WORD...
...THAT WOULD MEAN THE BABY IS RIGHT-SIDE UP.

DO YOU KNOW THIS IS A BREECH BABY FOR SURE?
IT'S ONLY A POSSIBILITY.
A MORE INTENSIVE PALPATION WOULD GIVE A CLEARER PICTURE.
AS THE LARGEST PART OF THE BABY'S BODY, DELIVERIES ARE SMOOTHEST IF THE HEAD COMES OUT FIRST.
BUT IF THE BABY IS POSITIONED FEET FIRST ...
...THERE IS MUCH GREATER RISK.
CAN YOU DO THAT?
IT WOULD BE...
...HARD TO SAY YES.

GO AHEAD.
PA ACTIVELY TAUGHT ME ABOUT MEDICINE AND PHARMACY, BUT...
...ALL MY KNOWLEDGE OF PHYSIOLOGY AND TREATMENT, I HAD TO GLEAN FROM WATCHING HIM WORK.
MY, REALLY?
WOULD IT BE ACCEPTABLE FOR ME TO...
MUMBLE
MUMBLE
THAT WOULD INVOLVE FEELING HER GENITALIA.
WHICH WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO DISGRACING HER, GIVEN WHO SHE IS.
BUT I DEFINITELY DON'T WANT TO BE PUNISHED FOR DISOBEYING AN ORDER.

PLEASE. FEEL FREE.
WELL, COMPARED TO BEARING A CHILD...
...THAT'S REALLY NO BIG DEAL.
BOW
MOTHERS SURE CAN BE TOUGH.
VERY WELL.
IT'S DIFFICULT TO SAY FOR SURE, GIVEN I'M CERTAINLY NO PROFESSIONAL.
SPLSH

I SHOULD'VE CAUGHT THIS SOONER.
BUT IT'D HAVE BEEN MUCH HARDER TO DETERMINE WHEN IT WAS SMALLER.
BUT BASED ON THE KICKING AND THE HEART-BEAT'S POSITIONS ...
...I'M 80% SURE IT'S A BREECH BABY.
BUT CONSORT GYOKUYO IS ALREADY IN HER THIRD TRIMESTER.
A BREECH BABY ROUGHLY TWO MONTHS BEFORE BIRTH IS ACTUALLY A BIT OF A PROBLEM.
AS THE BABY GROWS IN THE WOMB...
...IT CAN TURN ANY NUMBER OF TIMES.
WHAT CAN I DO?

I HAVE HEARD THAT EXERCISE AND MOXIBUSTION CAN HELP REMEDY IT.
I SEE.
THEN WE SHOULD ASK AROUND FOR WHAT COULD HELP.
I CAN PERFORM MOXI-BUSTION ...
...BUT YOU WOULD BE BETTER OFF ASKING SOMEONE FROM OUTSIDE THE INNER COURT ABOUT THE EXERCISE.
AND, PLEASE SEE TO THE MOXIBUSTION, MAOMAO.
OH, YES.
WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN IF THE BABY DOESN'T TURN BACK?

IN THE WORST CASE, YOUR BELLY MAY NEED TO BE CUT OPEN.
I DON'T LIKE CONSIDERING IT, BUT SHOULD THINGS COME TO THAT, CONSORT GYOKUYO'S LIFE WOULD BE IN GRAVE DANGER.
FORGET ABOUT THE MIDWIFE...
...THE LACK OF ANY COMPETENT DOCTOR ON HAND IS THE REAL PROBLEM.

UUUGH...
COULD THAT PROCEDURE EVEN BE FINISHED IN TIME?
WHY DO WE EVEN DO THINGS THIS WAY?
NNNGH
NOW, ASSUMING WE COULD EVEN HAVE A NEW DOCTOR BROUGHT INTO THE INNER COURT JUST FOR THIS...
...WE AREN'T MAKING NEW EUNUCHS ANYMORE.

THE QUACK IS A DECENT ENOUGH MAN, BUT HE'S FAR FROM COMPETENT.

NO.
DESPERATE TIMES CALL FOR DESPERATE MEASURES.

...IN SURGICAL DELIVERIES.
I AM AWARE OF ONE VERY SKILLED DOCTOR WITH AMPLE EXPERIENCE ...
LADY GYOKUYO.

...HE IS A FELON WHO HAS BEEN EXPELLED FROM THE INNER COURT ONCE ALREADY.
BUT...

YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY BE SERIOUS!
WHAT?
HONGNIANG MAKES A FAIR POINT.
ANY OTHER TIME, I'D QUICKLY RELENT.
THIS IS LADY GYOKUYO'S LIFE WE'RE TALKING ABOUT!
IF WE CAN'T TRUST THIS MAN ABSOLUTELY, THEN IT ISN'T HAPPENING.

HE HAS A GOOD NATURE, IF NOT ANY GOOD LUCK. HE'S MORE LIKE A GRANNY THAN A GRANDPA.
I BELIEVE MY FOSTER FATHER, LUOMEN, TO BE THE RIGHT CHOICE.
BUT LIKE SHE SAID, THIS IS LADY GYOKUYO'S LIFE.
YOU'RE UNUSUALLY INSISTENT ON THIS.
I TRUST HIM ABSO-LUTELY.
HOW-EVER...
...THAT HE'S A FELON IS INEXCUSABLE. END OF DISCUSSION.
HE IS THE BEST IN THE COUNTRY, BY FAR.
YOU COULD GATHER ANY NUMBER OF DOCTORS, AND NOT ONE WOULD COME CLOSE TO MATCHING HIM.

SWSH
TELL ME, WHAT CRIME IS HE GUILTY OF, EXACTLY?
HONG-NIANG.
LET HER SPEAK.
AND YOU, AS WELL, MAOMAO. RELAX, AND EXPLAIN IN DETAIL.
HE WAS FORMERLY A EUNUCH DOCTOR HERE.

...BUT IT WOULDN'T BE RIGHT TO SPECULATE ALOUD.
I DO HAVE SOME VAGUE INKLING AS TO THE SPECIFICS ...
BACK THEN, HE WAS RESPON-SIBLE FOR DELIVERING ...
...OUR EMPEROR AND CROWN PRINCE, AS WELL AS LADY AH-DUO'S CHILD.
ALL THE SAME, AS THE EMPEROR'S FAVORITE PRINCIPAL CONSORT...
...SHE MUST HAVE HEARD SOMETHING ABOUT THAT ENTIRE SITUATION.
AH.
I SEE.
ALL I HAVE HEARD OF HIS BANISHMENT FROM THE INNER COURT IS THAT IT RELATES TO LADY AH-DUO.

...VERY WELL.
AND HE TAUGHT ME ALL I KNOW ABOUT MEDICINE.
HE IS MY ADOPTIVE FATHER.
AND HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS FORMER EUNUCH DOCTOR, MAOMAO?
LADY GYOKUYO!
WE SHOULD BRING THIS SUGGESTION TO SIR JINSHI.
AND IF HE'S TRUSTWORTHY, THEN ALL THE BETTER.
I ALWAYS TRY TO MAKE USE OF THE MOST CAPABLE PEOPLE THAT I CAN.
HONG-NIANG.

BUT HE'S A FELON!
STRAY CAT? THE NERVE.
...HE CAN'T BE ALL BAD, CAN HE?
IF HE WAS KIND ENOUGH TO FOSTER OUR STRAY CAT HERE...
YES, A FELON.
YOU ALREADY KNOW SOME DETAILS ABOUT THE INNER COURT FROM THOSE FAR-OFF DAYS, DON'T YOU?
HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE CAST AWAY...
...DURING OUR GREAT EMPRESS'S RULE?

SUCH A COM-MANDING PRESENCE.
WOULD YOU TAKE EVERY STORY AT FACE VALUE?
UGH...

THEN, TWO DAYS LATER...
YES.
IF IT'S REALLY SO CONCERNING, WE CAN KEEP HIM UNDER SURVEILLANCE.
THAT SHOULD HEAD OFF ANY PROB-LEMS.
...PA MADE HIS ALARMINGLY QUICK ARRIVAL TO THE INNER COURT.
I'M SURE MAOMAO'S FUR WILL START LOOKING MUCH NICER.
AND IN FACT, THE QUACK IS SUPPOSED TO BE LOOKING AFTER PA WHILE HE'S HERE.
IT WAS A TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENT.
THE QUACK'S JOB ISN'T IN ANY DANGER.

...WELL, YES.
THAT MAN IS YOUR FATHER?
TECH-NICALLY, MY GREAT UNCLE.
PA IS THE ONLY WORTHWHILE DOCTOR IN THE WHOLE OF THE PLEASURE DISTRICT.
IF HE ISN'T BACK THERE BY THE NEW YEAR...
...THE OLD BIDDY MAY TAKE MATTERS INTO HER OWN HANDS AND FORCE HER WAY HERE.
HE LOOKS SO... NORMAL? AND DOWN-TO-EARTH?
HE'S JUST... NOT AT ALL HOW I'D PICTURED.
...WHAT EXACTLY WERE YOU PICTURING, THEN?
SO HE REALLY RAISED YOU? REALLY?